

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

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Downgraded To: SECRET CONFIDENTIAL

LEO 11652: XGDS

By: H. D. Broderick

August 4, 1975

DATE: March 14, 1959

SUBJECT:

Berlin Contingency Planning

PARTICIPANTS:

State  
Christian A. Herter, Acting Secretary  
Robert Murphy, Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs  
G. Frederick Reinhardt, Counselor  
Loftus E. Becker, Legal Adviser  
Livingston T. Merchant, Assistant Secy-European Affairs  
Francis O. Wilcox, Assistant Secy-International Organiza-  
tion Affairs

COPIES TO:

Gerard C. Smith, Assistant Secy-Policy Planning

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Defense  
Neil McElroy, Secretary  
Donald A. Quarles, Deputy Secretary  
General N. F. Twining, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff  
John N. Irwin II, Assistant Secy for ISA  
Robert H. Knight, Deputy Asst Secy for ISA  
General John S. Guthrie  
Admiral Charles O. Triebel  
Admiral F. O'Beirne  
Col. C. B. Billingslea

White House

Gordon Gray

James S. Lay, Jr.

General Goodpaster

Governor Herter opened the meeting by reading the memorandum of March 14 outlining the results of the State Department meeting of March 13 held in his office. [See Tab A].

Secretary McElroy said that there were two things the Defense Department people wanted to discuss which Governor Herter's reading had raised--

- The question of the cut-off point; and
- The question of the statement Governor Herter had read to the effect that in no circumstances should the US initiate general war.

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The latter point was resolved by general agreement at the meeting that the conclusion against the initiation of general war did not mean that the US would not expand the hostilities, if necessary, in the event of a blockage over Berlin access.

Governor Herter emphasized that there were a great many variables in this situation which prevented any very detailed contingency planning. He mentioned especially the question of when K Day would be reached. He pointed out that we have been focusing on May 27 which was all right for general planning purposes, but he warned that, in the event, K Day might arrive earlier or later than May 27. We should make clear in advance to the Soviets our firm intent to exercise our rights of access to Berlin.

Governor Herter said that there was some fuzziness in regard to our planning about a second resort to force (that is, after a symbolic probe followed further political negotiations).

General Twining and Secretary McElroy said that the military did not think highly of a limited resort to force because the communists are capable of stopping such a move. General Twining noted that we have the capability to lick the East Germans. It was noted, however, that any ground action in East Germany would put Western forces into immediate contact with the Russians. Secretary McElroy expressed concern about the possibility of fighting satellites in a ground battle in Europe.

On the suggestion of K Day procedures, Secretary McElroy suggested that our traffic should be just the same as on any pre-K Day rather than to introduce an armed scout car as is contemplated in present contingency planning. There appeared to be agreement for this proposed change. General Twining then read a list of steps which we are now taking quietly to let the Soviets know of our determination, e.g., setting up a communications center at Helmstedt, radio cars, etc.

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On the question of "no substitution" doctrine, Mr. Quarles asked if our position would be the same whether or not the Soviets had purported merely to assign their control functions to the East Germans as their agents. Governor Herter expressed the opinion that the situation might be different if the Soviet action took this form.

Secretary McElroy said he lacked direct information as to the procedure presently being followed at the control points and suggested that steps be taken to obtain this information through individuals who were acquainted with the present talks in Washington. Mr. Quarles agreed, and said that the individuals who might be sent to obtain this information should clearly distinguish between different functions, such as traffic control, tariff and passport type controls. General Twining thought it would be useful to have representatives from the Joint Staff observe traffic procedures for several weeks.

Governor Herter said that the Soviets were trying to force us to negotiate with the East Germans who might take the position that the slate had been wiped clean and that it was now up to the Western powers to negotiate a new deal with the East German government.

Secretary McElroy said that on the subject of Western powers not submitting to document stamping by the East Germans, he wanted to be very certain before agreeing to this procedure that such stamping would constitute recognition of the GDR in some way detrimental to the US security interests. Mr. Murphy pointed out that stamping was not only bad per se, but was dangerous as the first step down a slippery slope. He pointed out that after we had acceded to stamping we would be met with demands for inspection. Secretary McElroy asked why if this was the case we would even go so far as to accept the GDR's right to require identification. Mr. Merchant pointed out that our rationale for submitting to identification was that as victors in the war we had the right to use the access routes subject only to our identifying our personnel as representatives of the victorious Western powers.

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Secretary McElroy felt that our "no stamping" policy would be very difficult for public opinion to understand.

Governor Herter pointed out that the central point was forceable stopping of our traffic. We should try to focus on this aspect and not focus so much on the "no stamping" aspect.

Mr. Quarles asked what our position should be if the East Germans in proposing to stamp our papers said that the stamp was merely for identification purposes. Mr. Murphy pointed out that this would be unacceptable.

Governor Herter pointed out that a difficult decision would face us if the stamp was presented as merely a device for fixing the time on which we entered East Germany. However, Governor Herter said that in this event he thought the issue would be presented to us on a much broader basis and not on the minutiae of stamping. The East Germans would more likely take a position that the Western powers must deal with them on a number of procedural matters if they wanted to continue access to Berlin. Governor Herter pointed out that if the Soviets and East Germans sign a peace treaty we should assert our access rights promptly.

Mr. Wilcox pointed out that it would be difficult to present a convincing case to the UN if the issue came up on a "no stamping" point. Governor Herter pointed out that that was one of the reasons why we were considering the reference of the problem to the International Court of Justice.

Mr. Becker said that stamping could be considered merely as an identification function and he fully endorsed the idea of on the spot checking of the procedures now being used by the Soviets. Secretary McElroy suggested that the present procedures should be carefully photographed.

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Mr. Quarles said he would like to see a study made of the reciprocal controls placed by West Germans on Soviet personnel. He would also like to see a study of the control techniques covering railroad traffic by the East and West Germans. He said he understood that some of our military cargo is handled by rail and he asked what stamping by East Germans have we submitted to in regard to this cargo.

Secretary McElroy raised the point about a test of our right to fly aircraft into and from Berlin at altitudes above 10,000 feet. He said that if we needed a substantial airlift we would want to use large new planes which operate best at higher altitudes. The practice now is to fly between 2,500 feet and 10,000 feet, but we have never waived our right to fly at higher altitudes. He felt that it would be well to establish our right by precedent now rather than later when the tension might be higher.

Governor Herter said that this was largely a military matter in which the State Department did not have a strong position. If it was militarily important, he felt that it would be all right to go ahead. It was decided to put this proposal to the President.

Governor Herter said that the three Western powers were in the same position on Berlin access and stressed the need to concert our positions. The communists may well test one of our Allies rather than us in the first instance.

There was some discussion about the possibility of the Soviet controller leaving the air control at Templehof. Mr. Murphy said that we doubt that the Soviets would do this.

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General Twining then listed a number of pre-K Day moves that the Joint Chiefs would like to plan for:

1. Be prepared to deploy elements of the First Fleet to the Persian Gulf if the situation in the Middle East requires stabilization.
2. Be prepared to position one additional TAC rotational squadron at Adana and one at Ramstein, both squadrons to be equipped with SIDEWINDER.
3. Be prepared to deploy three squadrons of TAC to bases in Central Europe.
4. Expedite delivery of: (1) The undelivered portions of approved Mutual Security Programs with priority to NATO Allies; (2) Mutual Security military sales equipment to West Germany.
5. Station submarines for optimum capability for detection of Chinese and Soviet submarine egress from normal bases at Petropavlovsk, Vladivostok and Shanghai.
6. Defer directed USAREUR military strength reductions and bring combat and logistics elements up to full strength.
7. Accelerate training and movement of personnel replacement packets for Third and Fourth Armored Divisions in Europe.
8. Prepare to establish A/S barrier between Greenland-Iceland and United Kingdom, and position nuclear submarines in N. Cape-Murmansk area to obtain early warning of Soviet submarine deployments. Expedite collection of reports from the fixed surveillance system in Baltic exits. (These are Danish loops in Great Belt.)
9. Deploy the Second Fleet and associated forces to North Atlantic at an appropriate time.

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10. Maintain maximum practicable number of Sixth Fleet units at sea and conduct surveillance of Soviet and Egyptian submarine departures from Vlova, Albania and Alexandria.
11. Provide for immediate compensatory replacement of major USAREUR forces moved to North Germany in the event of activation of plans to reopen ground access to Berlin.

Secretary McElroy expressed a dissenting opinion to the proposal [numbered 6 above] calling for deployment of 7,000 additional troops to Europe.

Mr. Quarles expressed concern that in our thinking we still reflected remnants of the thinking in 1945 when the Soviets were our presumed friends and the Germans our enemies. We should avoid insistence on the status quo which involves retention of the Soviet Berlin position. We should try to cultivate the adverse interest of the East German people and the GDR.

Mr. Murphy pointed out that it is the German pressure which is strongest for the "no substitution" doctrine.

Mr. Quarles expressed the hope that we could avoid "being trapped". He pointed out that the West Germans had defacto dealings with the East Germans.

Mr. Merchant pointed out that the Bonn working group was considering "identification" procedures and that a man from this group should work with any team sent over from Washington to observe and report on current practices.

Mr. Irwin reverted to the question of what would constitute "obstruction" of our access. Would it be a physical blockage; a thrust of a gun in the face of an American? Mr. Murphy stated that there must be some element of force.

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There was then additional discussion about the possibility of breaking through the barrier, exchanging shots, identification procedures, etc.

Mr. Quarles expressed the opinion that we should not physically raise the barrier if the East Germans would not accept our identification.

Mr. Irwin asked what our policy would be if the East Germans permitted open convoys to pass but not closed convoys. Mr. Murphy thought this would be unacceptable as an attempt to exercise inspection rights which the GDR did not possess.

Mr. Smith pointed out the desirability of television coverage for any Western effort to exercise access rights so that a clear public case could be made.

Mr. Gray asked about the possibility of breaking off diplomatic relations in the event of blockage of access. Governor Herter said that was being looked at but that a decision on this could be deferred.

Governor Herter said that he hoped the military was studying the question of a counter-blockade which had been raised in a Policy Planning Staff memorandum. General Twining said that the Chiefs were studying the general question of possible "heckling" of the communists by the Western powers.

General Twining stated that the Joint Chiefs were unhappy about our present state of preparations. They were concerned about the prospect of Prime Minister Macmillan persuading us away from our firm position of Berlin access. General Twining felt that we should take a position now that if necessary to keep Berlin we would risk all-out war. For tactical purposes, this position should be stated by the President to Macmillan before Macmillan had any opportunity to present British views.

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Mr. Irwin pointed out the difficulty arising from the absence of any decision in connection with paragraph D of the contingency planning paper of February 18. In effect, the decision as to resort to force was being held in abeyance.

There was discussion about the British position that they could not decide on resort to force as a matter of principle until there had been combined US-UK planning. It was pointed out that, although the US had objected to this type of planning in Washington, there was some planning going on in Europe.

Governor Herter raised the point as to how long we might continue efforts in the UN after a blockage had occurred. Secretary McElroy suggested that in this period we should be conducting a probe of the East German block each day.

Mr. Merchant pointed out that in regard to the UK Secretary Dulles had returned from his recent European trip with a solid commitment on the "no substitution" doctrine and on the use of force if necessary. The French were more truculent. The UK does differ from us in regard to "stamping" and they seem to favor a longer negotiating period.

Mr. Merchant pointed out that we have a good measure of agreement with our NATO allies, as indicated by the December communique. He felt that we start the allied negotiations from a good firm base.

Mr. Gray pointed out that the President would be able to meet on this matter next Tuesday.

Mr. Smith asked if there was agreement on a proposal to the President that a study by State, Defense, JCS and the CIA be made of possible courses of military action after blockage of access. Governor Herter said that this proposal could be put to the President on Tuesday.

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